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**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
THE BASIC SCHOOL  
MARINE CORPS TRAINING COMMAND  
CAMP BARRETT, VIRGINIA 22134-5019

# **ROLE OF THE CHAPLAIN**

## **B130615**

# **STUDENT HANDOUT**

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## Role of the Chaplain

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### Introduction

The Chaplain Corps is directed to provide religious ministry and ensure the free exercise of religion for military members and their dependents. Knowing your Marines and their spiritual condition is as important as knowing their performance level. The Chaplain is here to assist you in knowing your Marines.

### Importance

Having a Chaplain Corps is of vital importance to maintaining religious freedom within the Department of Defense. It serves not to force faith on Sailors and Marines but to guarantee that they may worship while serving their country.

### In This Lesson

Some of the information in this lesson can give you, as a leader, an edge on understanding the purposes for having chaplains and what their roles are while serving as special staff officers. Also, this lesson discusses the entire religious ministry concept and how it can help you as a company grade officer.

This lesson covers the following topics:

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### Learning Objectives

#### Enabling Learning Objectives

MCCS-LDR-1001a Without the aid of references, describe the role of the Chaplain, to support personal, family, and Marine problem solving.

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## What is a Chaplain? And What do They do?

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The Chaplain serves as an ethical and spiritual advisor to the commanding officer and as a pastor, counselor, and educator to the command. Chaplains provide religious services and/or sacraments to those of their own faith group. They also facilitate the free exercise of religion of those of other faith groups while providing care and counsel to all regardless of religious affiliation.

Chaplains are members of the clergy who volunteer to minister within the military service. They bring special talents and abilities to the battlefield that are extremely useful to the commander. They have a unique viewpoint of the human soul. This ability to provide soulful care is a force multiplier to the commander that many do not fully utilize. Your chaplains are another set of eyes on the welfare of your unit. Also, seek them for your own benefit. They can often be a source of unbiased, wise counsel.

With the understanding of the chaplain's role, the most important thing to remember is that *all* meetings with the chaplain are completely confidential.

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## What is a Command Religious Program?

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The commanding officer of the unit to which the chaplain is assigned is responsible for the Command Religious Program. The Command Religious Program consists of these tasks:

- Advising the commanding officer and other members of the command on religious and morale issues.
- Conducting divine services and administering the sacraments.
- Pastoral care and counseling.
- Deck plate ministry (workspace, field, hospital visits, etc.).
- Religious education (Bible study, baptisms, marriage seminars).
- Professional military education (PME) on subjects such as suicide prevention, ethics/core values, combat stress management, warrior transition, world religions, and pre- and post-deployment briefs.

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## What is a Religious Ministry Team?

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The religious ministry team (RMT) consists of chaplains, religious program specialists (RPs), and volunteer lay leaders from the unit.

### Religious Program Specialist

RPs are not required to be religious. They assist the chaplain daily providing support which may include but is not limited to

- Providing administrative support.
- High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) licensed driving.
- M16 and pistol qualified due to combatant status. Chaplains are non-combatants; therefore, the RP protects the chaplain in a hostile situation.
- Rig for services whether in a chapel or in a field environment.

### Volunteer Lay Leaders

The right to free exercise of religion ensures that individuals belonging to a faith group with no chaplain present can worship according to their own tradition. Command endorsed lay leaders normally function in expeditionary settings; e.g., in the field, on board ship. However, lay leaders may function in garrison if their faith group is not represented in the base chapel or community. Lesson text continues here.

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## Summary

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This lesson has covered the role of the chaplain, the command religious program, and the religious ministry team. These are valuable resources for you at TBS and as future leaders of Marines.

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## References

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Reference Number or Author	Reference Title
MCO 3500.44B	Religious Ministry Team Training and Readiness Manual

Term or Acronym	Definition or Identification
PME	Professional Military Education
RMT	Religious Ministry Team
RP	Religious Program Specialist
HMM\1\N	High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle

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